

Echoes of Religious Thought.

BY W. K. AZBILL.

"Principle Can be Reserved."

Says the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*:

If an evil must be tolerated, let the question of principle be suspended, and the evil be made less offensive.

We try to follow the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." But we heartily approve of killing off the Filipinos, because they will not do that which we tell them to do. We simply resort to "practical" methods to accomplish a certain result. If the community will urge the executive to act, we shall make this evil less intolerable, and the principle can be reserved as we reserve it in the case of wars.

Commenting on a report of the social evil in Pauahi street, the editor of the *Advertiser* writes the foregoing which, we undertake to say, shows a lack of discrimination between things widely different, in addition to its being a very bad lesson in morals.

"Thou shalt not kill" prohibits the individual from taking the life of his fellowman. But God, who gave this precept, authorizes the whole community to punish murderers. When the community executes a murderer, it is no longer we who take his life, but his maker who commands it to be done by the whole community. In case of war, the principle involved is the same. The civil government is ordained of God. He requires it to keep order. The army is but a larger police force, acting under the government which acts under God. He takes away the lives which He gave and which He has a right to take away, in case of justifiable war. The war in the Philippines is as justifiable as the arrest of a disturber of the peace in our streets. So, in war we do not suspend a principle; we honor it.

There can arise no circumstance in which a man may innocently suspend a righteous principle. When Herod was asked for the head of John the Baptist on a charger, he said that because he had promised anything that might be asked, he would be obliged to suspend the evil of killing and keep the king's promise. Here he failed to recognize the truth that the life of an innocent man was not within the gift of his kingdom. Solomon made a like promise once, but when the request was made known to him, he decided that it was not within his power to give, and he refused it. Human life is not within the gift of a kingdom or government. God alone can authorize the taking of life.

Of course there is room here for mistakes as to whether God approves of a particular war, and all that; but we are attempting to point out that we cannot deliberately suspend a principle of right doing to meet an emergency without guilt.

Bible Scenes on the Stage.

Dr. Gunsaulus, of Chicago, has set a certain section of the press to recording opinions, as to the propriety of putting some of the dramatic situations of the Bible Stories on the stage, and, of course, opinions differ.

He himself admits, that the crucifixion of Christ is too sacred for such a representation of it, but thinks that the life of Nehemiah might be successfully presented.

We all recognize what might be called the *truth of fiction*; that is, the separate bits of real experiences which are woven by novelists into connected stories. But we rarely forget, that the stories thus produced are fictitious. At rare moments of striking resemblance to real life, we forget and are touched and moved till the thought returns that it is only a made-up story, when emotion dies. Thus it is with all acting. We carry through the play the consciousness that it is mere acting; that the actors neither love nor hate, nor suffer nor cry, nor enjoy nor laugh as they are pretending to. There is something of untruth in it. All this would be felt most deeply by all persons witnessing presentations of Bible scenes and situations; and this consciousness would result in mixed emotions harmful to reverence for the Scriptures. Judging by what we see in the daily life of many about us, there would be no lack of actors who would "play the Devil" successfully. The discussion on ritual continues to occupy much space in the religious papers. The indications are that the high church and low church parties, have come to a wider parting of the ways. Also that the way of the ritualists is leading directly towards Rome.

What is One's Supreme Duty.

The newspapers say that Pres. Diaz gave up his trip to Omaha because his wife was ill. A friend who went to Japan a few years ago in the great interest of soul-winning, turns aside from this and goes back to the United States on hearing that his mother is at the point of death. Another, whose heart is in the work on the mission field remains at home by the bedside of an invalid child. Thus in the judgment and in the hearts of most good people, the homely duties, those we owe to the members of our households and our neighbors, are the supreme duties of life.

Rev. A. V. Soares, pastor of the Portuguese church in Honolulu, and Rev. B. K. Baptiste, pastor of the Portuguese church in Hilo, report a prosperous year of Christian work among their people. It is pleasing to note that their notion of prosperity is not that of a large increase in membership, but of the healthy advance of the believers in spirituality.

"Variety's the spice of life" and "Not much the worse for wear" were coined by Cowper.

Edward Young tells us "Death loves a shining mark," and "A fool at forty is a fool indeed."

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